

TALKING POINTS: RAISING FUEL ECONOMY STANDARDS

SUPPORT THE BOEHLERT-MARKEY FUEL ECONOMY LEGISLATION

- Sierra Club supports the bipartisan Boehlert (R-NY) – Markey (D-MA) fuel economy legislation HRXXXX.
- The Boehlert-Markey bill raises fuel economy standards to 33 miles per gallon by 20XX for both passenger cars and light trucks. Taking this step would save the average driver \$XXX at the gas pump each year. It would also save 2.5 million barrels of oil by 2020 – that’s more oil than the United States currently imports from the entire Persian Gulf.
- President Bush has asked Congress to give him authority to change the structure. Without setting a higher standard, a size based system just creates new loopholes allowing automakers to build more gas-guzzlers. The Boehlert-Markey bill gives the President authority to change the system while ensuring that overall fuel economy increases.

THE BIGGEST SINGLE STEP

- Making our cars and trucks go farther on a gallon of gas is the biggest single step we can take to saving money at the gas pump, curbing global warming, and cutting America’s oil dependence.
- Congress passed the first Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards in 1975 in response to the first OPEC oil embargo. We succeeded in doubling the fuel economy of American vehicles over ten years. According to a 2001 report by the National Academy of Science, these standards save 2.8 million barrels of oil per day, making CAFE the nation’s most successful oil savings law ever passed.
- Fuel economy standards have not been significantly increased since they were first enacted in 1975. In the face of auto industry opposition, Congress failed to continue raising standards after the original law was fully implemented. As a result, the average new vehicle sold today gets worse fuel economy than the average new vehicle sold in 1982.

THE TECHNOLOGY EXISTS

- The technology exists today to make all vehicles – from sedans to SUVs to pickup trucks – go farther on a gallon of gas. This can be done by using off-the-shelf technology like more efficient engines, smarter transmissions, and better materials. Increasing fuel economy is not rocket science, it’s just smart auto mechanics.
- Fuel saving technology is being used today in some vehicles, but it should be used in all. Technology like variable valve control engines, continuously variable transmissions, cylinder deactivation, and others can cost-effectively improve fuel economy.

SAFETY & CONSUMER CHOICE

- Building safe vehicles that go farther on a gallon of gas is about better technology. When Congress first enacted CAFE standards in 1975, we succeeded

in doubling the fuel economy of vehicles. Over the same period, the rate of highway fatalities declined by half.

- In poll after poll, Americans overwhelmingly support raising fuel economy standards. In a recent Yale University poll, 93 percent of Americans supported raising fuel economy standards.
- American consumers deserve to go on the lot of any auto dealership and find cars, trucks, and SUVs that get good fuel economy. Right now, consumers are only given a handful of fuel efficient options, such as hybrids. Raising fuel economy standards will ensure that consumers can choose between a wide range of fuel efficient models.
- While the rise in gas prices is encouraging some consumers to shift to more fuel efficient vehicles, automakers continue to build gas guzzling vehicles that lack existing fuel saving technology. Raising fuel economy standards ensures that all vehicles